things you said while we were driving in the car by Browneyesparker

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She joins him with her sweet alto voice. The teen choir director at church says the angels weep with happiness when the two of them sing together and today, under the sunshine and the open road, Mike believes her. They’re a perfect harmony, like God created them especially to be together.

things you said while we were driving in the car

things you said while we were driving

Summer 1987

the world is alive and shining, i feel such a wonderful drive to valentine-ing

“Wanna go for a drive?” Mike asks, casually leaning against the convertible he has just finished restoring.

“It’s done!?” Eleven squeals, jumping up and down on the porch.

“I just finished it about 20 minutes ago!” Mike answers proudly. “I’m going to take my favorite girl out for a spin to see how it runs before I try and sell it. What do you say?”

Eleven looks flattered. “Are you talking about me?”

“I don’t see any other girls around,” Mike says. “So? Do you wanna?”

“Hold on, I have to tell my mom that I’m going out!” Eleven replies, disappearing inside Castle Byers. She returns a few minutes later, with a fistful of cassettes and wearing sunglasses and an oversized, chunky knit cardigan because it’s unusually cool for August. “Mama says it’s okay if I go, I just have to be home in time for dinner.”

“Okay!” Mike agrees and seconds later, they’re driving down the road and she’s blasting music from the tape player he installed, her bare feet on the dashboard as she sings along with Carpenters songs.

She looks at him and smiles. “Sing with me, Mike?” she asks as she turns the volume up. “And don’t say you don’t know the song because I know it’s a lie! Besides the guys aren’t around. There’s nothing to be embarrassed about!”

Mike blushes. “Fine. But this stays between us, I don’t want you running home and telling Max about it! She tells Dustin *everything*!”

“I promise!” Eleven says, hooking her finger through his and shaking

it in a pinky swear.

Mike takes a deep breath and starts to sing, *"You are the one who makes me happy when everything else turns to gray. Yours is the voice that wakes me mornings and sends me out into the day."*

She joins him with her sweet alto voice. The teen choir director at church says the angels weep with happiness when the two of them sing together and today, under the sunshine and the open road, Mike believes her. They're a perfect harmony, like God created them especially to be together.

"You are the crowd that sits quiet listening to me," Eleven joins him, closing her eyes as they sing together. *"And all the mad sense I make, you are one of the few things worth remembering. And since it's all true, how can anyone mean anything more to me than you? Sorry if sometimes I look past you, there's no one beyond your eyes. Inside my head, the wheels are turning and sometimes I'm not so wise."*

Mike stops singing and glances at her, suddenly overwhelmed with words he still hasn't said. He's wondering what's been taking him so long to say it.

"You are my heart and my soul, my inspiration—" Eleven pauses, suddenly very self-conscious. "Mike? Is everything okay? I'm not singing off-key, am I?"

He shakes his head. "No," he says hoarsely.

"Well come on, we didn't finish the song!" She replies, tugging at his arm, trying to urge him to finish the song with her.

Mike clears his throat and opens his mouth but nothing comes out, not a single sound except for a squeak. She looks at him anxiously then leans over to kill the music. They are left with silence, save for the wind rushing past them as they drive down the road.

He swallows and then pulls over, letting the convertible idle. Eleven knots her hands in her floral print skirt and stares straight ahead, confused to how things could have gotten so serious, so fast.

“Eleven,” Mike whispers.

She looks over at him, her heart pounding harder, there is something she doesn’t recognize in his voice and yet, she thinks it’s always been there. “Yeah?” she whispers back.

Mike swallows again, his throat and mouth suddenly incredibly dry. She looks at expectantly and he realizes there will probably never be the perfect time or place to say *it*. He’ll never be incredibly courageous.

And those three words.

He’s been hosting them for too long, they’re starting to eat him up inside, he expels a deep breath and decides just to say it.

“Wanna get a Coke?” he jokes instead.

“What?” Eleven asks weakly, deflating slightly.

“I mean. . .” Mike trails off and takes his hands off the wheel, running them through his hair. “Why the hell is this so hard to say!?”

Eleven senses his distress and puts her hand on his knee to steady him. He drops one hand on top of her’s and weaves their fingers together.

“You can tell me anything,” she says, pushing her sunglasses up on her head.

“I know,” Mike answers.

“You’ve been keeping secrets from me,” Eleven observes.

“For longer than you could imagine,” Mike replies wryly.

“Bad secrets?” Eleven asks, frowning.

Mike shakes his head. “Secrets that could change everything between us, forever.”

Eleven feels like her world is tipping off its axis. “You like someone

else better than you like me, don't you? Who is she? The pretty blonde you tutored in trig?"

Mike's eyes widen and he tightens his grip on her hand. "No! Ellie, it isn't anything like that! I could *never* like anybody more than I like you! Not for as long as I live!"

"Then what is it?" Eleven whispers.

"You can't see it?" Mike asks.

Eleven shrugs. "I'm still not great at picking up social cues, Mike. Please just tell me. I need to know."

Mike knows then he has to tell her. There will be no perfect moment, no pomp or circumstance. No John Hughes happy ending with them riding off into the sunset or kissing on a table with birthday cake between them.

The abnormal circumstances he has always imagined for their first *I love you* will be decidedly unremarkable, a change of pace for two of Hawkins resident weirdos.

Except there can be music, he leans over and turns the radio back on. As luck would have it, music is playing instead of a set of commercials.

For the next few moments, it feels like the whole universe is holding its breath with anticipation.

He lifts her hand to his mouth and kisses it. Eleven freezes, the dread in her face is suddenly replaced with hope.

"I mean what I've been trying to say is that I've become a whole different person ever since I met you. I was just a dorky 12-year-old who didn't really have any clue what love was. I couldn't even imagine a life outside of my own world. Then I found you and you helped me see the world. . . *my* world differently, you showed me what it could be. And I-I love you for it. You don't even know how much I love you Eleven."

She leans over and presses her mouth against his. He's startled at first

but it doesn't take him long to reciprocate, marveling at both of their newfound bravery. He's amazed at how freeing actually saying those three little words out loud really is. It's like a great weight has been lifted off of his shoulders.

He feels like he has been branded into somebody brand new. The whole world is bright and shiny, like in one of his mother's favorite Barbra Streisand songs. Even kissing her feels different, he wonders if she can feel it too.

She pulls away, rests her forehead against his. "I love you too," she hums.

He initiates the kiss this time and he swears he can taste fairytales and happily ever afters on her mouth. Now that it's out in the open, he knows nothing will ever be the same between them again.

But neither of them seems to mind.

"Say it again," she requests.

"I love you," Mike says, stronger and braver than before.

She beams. "I love you too."

They say it all the way back to her house and Mike doesn't think he'll ever be able to stop.

End

.

Author's Note:

> Real talk, this story went through seven songs before I finally picked the one with the feeling and lyrics I was going for. I could have probably picked a dozen others. Initially, Mike and Eleven were not going to say "I love you" but I had no control over it. It

happened and it fit so well, I had to keep it. I have a crazy head canon where Mike sings old 70s songs with his mom while they're cleaning the kitchen after dinner, so that's how he knows them.

I hope you enjoyed this. I definitely enjoyed writing it.

Be back soon. Maybe with the story that I was first writing before I came up with this piece. We'll see! The songs in this were "He Touched Me" by Barbra Streisand and "You" by Carpenters.

Until Next Time!